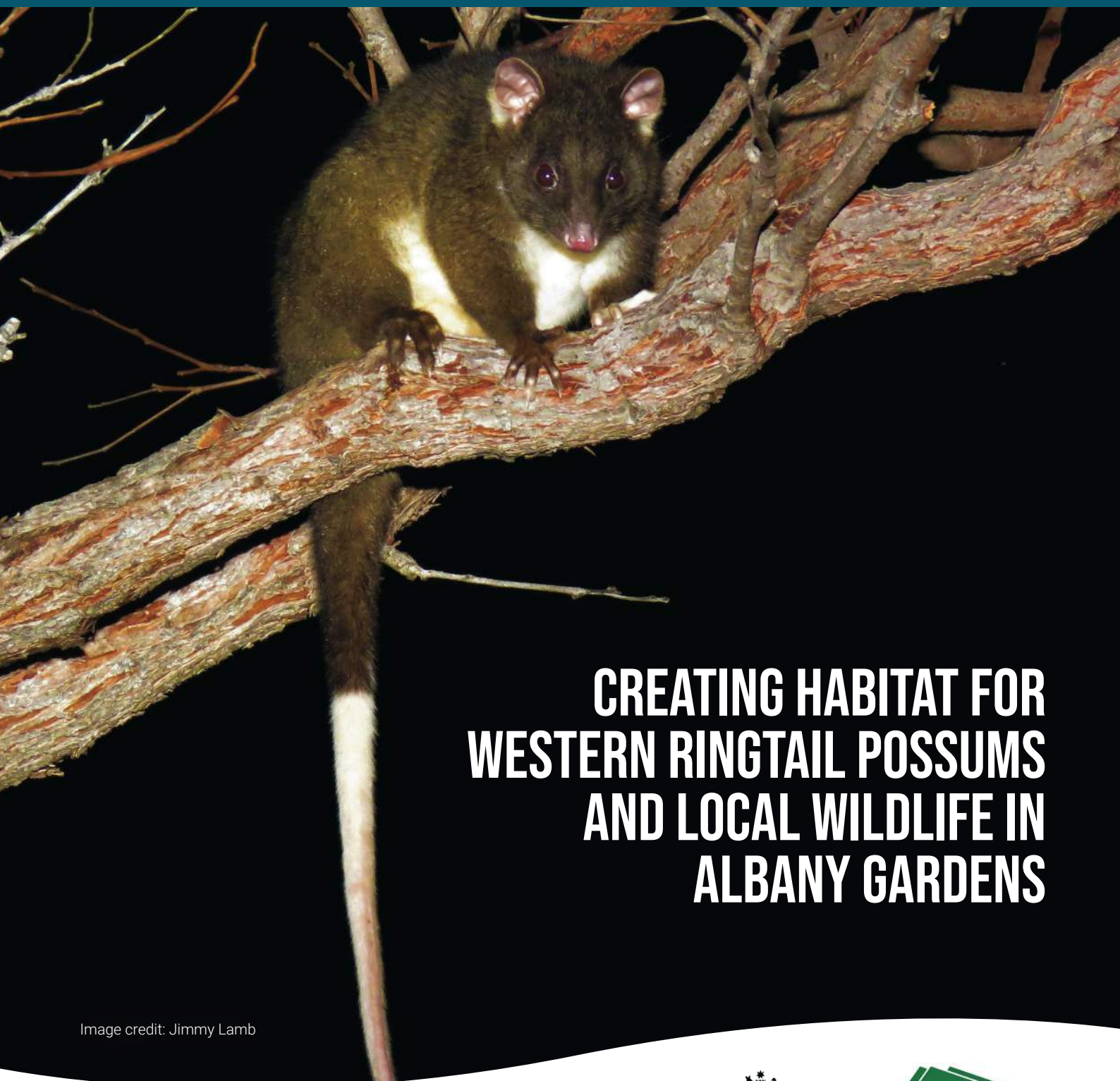


PLANTING FOR POSSUMS



**CREATING HABITAT FOR
WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUMS
AND LOCAL WILDLIFE IN
ALBANY GARDENS**

Image credit: Jimmy Lamb

southcoastnrm.com.au



Australian Government





Image credit: Jimmy Lamb

INTRODUCING THE WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM (*PSEUDOCHEIRUS OCCIDENTALIS*)

The western ringtail possum is a unique and gentle native marsupial found only in the south-west of Western Australia. Recognisable by its long, slender prehensile tail with a white tip, rounded ears, and soft dark brown or grey fur, this quiet species lives in bushlands, gardens, and other urban areas.

Western ringtail possums are nocturnal, and in natural habitat spend their nights feeding on leaves, flowers and fruit - particularly from jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), sheoak (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*) and peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) trees as well as many other native plants. In urban areas they feed on a variety of native and non-native garden plants. They obtain all their nutrients and most of their water from this plant material. The south coast population, including those around Albany, shows greater flexibility in habitat use than their northern counterparts.

For nesting, they generally use tree hollows, dense undergrowth, or dreys—nests made by carrying twigs and leaves with their tails. In urban areas, they may also nest in roof spaces. Possums often maintain several dreys within their home range, which can be as small as half a hectare in built-up areas. They rarely descend to the ground, instead relying on continuous canopy cover to move safely through the landscape. In suburbia, they use trees, rooftops, fences, and even powerlines to navigate around the town!

Once widespread across the south-west, the western ringtail possum has lost more than 90% of its natural range since European settlement. The south coast of Western Australia, particularly around Albany, is now one of its last remaining strongholds. Today, the species is listed as Critically Endangered at state, national, and international levels.

Threats such as habitat loss, climate change, predation by introduced species, and road mortality continue to push this shy native closer to extinction. But there's still hope – and urban areas are one area where we can work together to help conserve this highly threatened species! By improving garden habitats and managing pets responsibly, we can all help ensure a future for the western ringtail possum.

HOW YOU CAN HELP – URBAN GREENING TO CREATE HEALTHY, ATTRACTIVE SUBURBS AND HABITAT CORRIDORS

Western ringtail possums rely on plants for their survival. By choosing the right plants in your garden, verge or revegetation project, you can help provide food, shelter and safe pathways for these threatened possums.

This booklet is a simple guide to selecting plants that will help green your property in the Albany area. Each plant is given a priority ranking based on evidence of its benefit to western ringtail possums.

While western ringtail possums may use some non-local species—such as lilly pilly and New Zealand Christmas trees—it's best to grow local native plants. These are better suited to our soils and climate, are more waterwise, and support a wider range of local wildlife.

Creating a garden that includes local native species helps support biodiversity around Albany—and gives you the added benefit of a beautiful, resilient outdoor space to enjoy.



Image credit: Bronte Van Helden

PLANT CATEGORIES BY IMPORTANCE TO WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUMS

- **Extra high:** Plants in this category are exceptionally possum-friendly. There is clear evidence that possums consume them, use them for drey construction, or rely on them for safe movement. These are typically compact trees or shrubs that are well-suited for urban environments.

- **High:** Similar to the Extra High category, these plants are very beneficial to possums—providing food, drey-building material, or safe pathways—but they are generally larger trees. Their suitability may be limited to specific locations within urban settings due to size or other factors.

- **Moderate:** While possums may not directly consume these plants, they offer valuable connectivity by providing structural support for movement and potential nesting (drey construction).

- **Low:** Although these plants are not ideal for canopy movement or as a primary food source, they can still play a role by offering structural elements that assist possums in navigating between the ground and higher areas. Occasionally, possums might use them for a quick snack.

***Note:** While this booklet focuses mainly on canopy plants, incorporating understory plants can add valuable layers to your garden. For instance, Coastal Sword Sedge (*Lepidosperma gladiatum*) can provide essential refuge during the heat of summer.

PLANT SPECIES DETAILS

► LARGE TREES



MARRI (*CORYMBIA CALOPHYLLA*)

Priority: High

Size: Large tree up to 40m

Soil: Clay loam, sandy clay, gravel, sand

Flowers: White/pink from December to May

Position: Prefers full sun, tolerant of partial shade

Advice: Easy to grow in well-drained soil. Planting seedlings in mid-autumn is best. Moderate root invasiveness—plant with space.

Benefits: Provides canopy connectivity and predator protection. Seeds in 'honky nuts' are favoured by Carnaby's black cockatoos. Excellent hollow-forming tree.



JARRAH (*EUCALYPTUS MARGINATA*)

Priority: High

Size: Large tree up to 40m

Soil: Grey sand, clay, sandy loam, laterite

Flowers: White-cream/pink from June to January

Position: Full sun or partial shade

Advice: Plant in the back of the yard, away from infrastructure due to moderate root invasiveness. Drought tolerant and best planted in mid-autumn.

Benefits: Attracts birds, reptiles, frogs and mammals. Provides height for predator protection.



BLACKBUTT (*EUCALYPTUS PATENS*)

Priority: High

Size: Large tree up to 25m

Soil: Gravelly soils, sandy clay, loam

Flowers: White/cream from August to February

Position: Prefers a sunny position and moist, well-drained site

Advice: Performs best in well-drained soil and is drought resistant. Allow plenty of space for it to grow.

Benefits: Easy to grow and provides shelter and food for birds, insects and mammals.



YATE (*EUCALYPTUS CORNUTA*)

Priority: High

Size: Large tree up to 25m

Soil: Sand, loam

Flowers: Yellow/green from January to November

Position: Full sun or partial shade

Advice: Grows best in well-drained soil and is sensitive to waterlogging. Plant in spring or autumn with ample space.

Benefits: Attracts insects, birds, reptiles and mammals. Dense canopy used for shade and nesting.



BULLICH (*EUCALYPTUS MEGACARPA*)

Priority: High

Size: Large tree up to 35m or robust mallee to 5m

Soil: Sand, sandy loam, limestone

Flowers: White from April to November

Position: Prefers full sun and moist sites such as hills, swamps and streams

Advice: Plant in well-drained soil; young trees benefit from regular watering. Allow ample space for growth.

Benefits: Attracts and supports birds and insects. Black cockatoos nest in this species; Baudin's cockatoos feed on seeds.

► MEDIUM TREES



PEPPERMINT / WEEPING PEPPERMINT (*AGONIS FLEXUOSA*)

Priority: High

Size: Tree up to 8m

Soil: Sandy soils, laterite, limestone

Flowers: White from August to December

Position: Sunny to lightly shaded

Advice: Plant at least 1m from structures. Very easy to grow and drought resistant. Tolerates pruning.

Benefits: Dense canopy used by possums for dreys and food. Offers shade and predator protection for multiple species.



SHEOAK (*ALLOCASUARINA FRASERIANA*)

Priority: High

Size: Tree up to 15m

Soil: Lateritic soils, sandy soils

Flowers: Brown catkin and small red flowers from May to October

Position: Full sun to light shade

Advice: Easy to grow and hardy. Male and female plants are separate. Water seedlings during first summer.

Benefits: Good for shade, rarely drops limbs. Fixes nitrogen. Dreys built in canopy; attracts diverse wildlife.



RED FLOWERING GUM (*CORYMBIA FICIFOLIA*)

Priority: High

Size: Tree up to 10m

Soil: Sand or sandy loam, often with gravel

Flowers: Red/orange from late spring to early autumn

Position: Full sun to light shade

Advice: Ornamental species with large gumnuts. Plant in mid-autumn, water until established. Prune to manage shape.

Benefits: Habitat for a wide range of fauna. Popular for its bright flowers.



ALBANY BLACKBUTT (*EUCALYPTUS STAERI*)

Priority: High

Size: Tree up to 10m or mallee form

Soil: Sandy soils, laterite

Flowers: White/cream from August to February

Position: Full sun

Advice: Plant in well-drained soil with space for multi-stemmed form. Drought resistant once established.

Benefits: Supports birds, reptiles, frogs and mammals.



RED SWAMP BANKSIA (*BANKSIA OCCIDENTALIS*)

Priority: Extra high

Size: Tree up to 7m

Soil: Sand or peaty sand

Flowers: Red/orange/yellow from September to May

Position: Low lying swamp areas with full sun or partial shade

Advice: Tolerates short flooding. Fertiliser not needed.

Benefits: Attracts nectar-feeding birds and small mammals.



BANKSIAS (*B. PRAEMORSA*, *B. ATTENUATA*, *B. GRANDIS*, *B. ILICIFOLIA*)

Priority: Extra high/High

Size: Trees/tall shrubs growing up to between 4-12m

Soil: Sandy soils, sandy loams, gravelly sands

Flowers: Variable - Green-yellow/red (*B. praemorsa*), Yellow (*B. attenuata*), Yellow-green (*B. grandis*), Red/orange/yellow/cream (*B. ilicifolia*)

Position: Full sun to light shade

Advice: Best planted mid-autumn in the back of the yard. No fertiliser needed.

Benefits: Easy to grow. Aesthetic cone flowers. Provides a food source for birds, such as cockatoos, and mammals. Will provide habitat for insects, birds, reptiles and mammals. Possums use for dreys and food.

► LARGE SHRUBS/SMALL TREES



WOOLLYBUSH (*ADENANTHOS SERICEUS*)

Priority: Extra high

Size: Shrub up to 5m

Soil: Sandy soils

Flowers: Red for most of the year

Position: Full sun or partial shade

Advice: Drought hardy. Water seedlings twice weekly in first summer.

Benefits: Screening plant. Attracts birds, insects, reptiles and mammals. Possum food source.



WONNICH/NATIVE WILLOW (*CALLISTACHYS LANCEOLATA*)

Priority: High

Size: Shrub up to 6m

Soil: Sandy soils

Flowers: Orange/yellow from September to January

Position: Damp areas, sunny or partially shaded

Advice: Hardy, frost and drought tolerant.

Benefits: Scented pea flowers. Possums build dreys and feed on flowers. Good for screening and attracting birds.



HAKEAS (*H. LAURINA*, *H. ELLIPTICA*, *H. DRUPACEA*, *H. VARIA*)

Priority: Extra high

Size: Trees or shrubs growing up to 4-6m

Soil: Variable depending on the species

Flowers: Colour and timing vary by species

Position: Full sun to light shade (*H. varia* tolerates wetter sites)

Advice: Plant early spring. Prune late winter.

Benefits: Ornamental, low-maintenance, drought tolerant. Attract invertebrates, birds, reptiles, frogs and mammals.

► SHRUBS



SUMMER SNOWFLAKES (*AGONIS THEIFORMIS*)

Priority: Extra high

Size: Shrub up to 2m

Soil: Sand over laterite, limestone or granite

Flowers: White from October and December

Position: Full sun to partial shade, well-drained soil

Advice: Water thoroughly but allow soil to dry between waterings. Plant in autumn or spring.

Benefits: Great hedging shrub with showy flowers. Attracts pollinators and provides food for possums.



BASKET BUSH (*SPYRIDUM GLOBULOSUM*)

Priority: Extra high

Size: Shrub up to 3m

Soil: Sandy soils

Flowers: White from June to November

Position: Full sun to partial shade

Advice: Easy-to-grow and drought resistant.

Benefits: Screening plant. Attracts and supports a wide range of native fauna.

► CLIMBERS



COMMON CLEMATIS (*CLEMATIS PUBESCENS*)

Priority: Extra high

Size: Climber up to 5m

Soil: Most soil types

Flowers: White-cream from May to November

Position: Adaptable

Advice: Drought hardy. Climbs trees, fences and other structures. Water seedlings twice weekly in first summer.

Benefits: Attractive flowers, screening option. Attracts pollinators and provides food and shelter for possums.

OTHER LOCAL NATIVE PLANTS

These native plants still offer habitat and food sources for a wide range of wildlife, and can complement your possum-friendly garden:

Scientific Name	Common Name	Plant Form	Priority
<i>Acacia browniana</i>	Brown's Wattle	Shrub	Low
<i>Acacia cochlearis</i>	Rigid Wattle	Shrub	Low
<i>Acacia cyclops</i>	Coastal Wattle	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Acacia littorea</i>	Coastal Dune Wattle	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Acacia myrtifolia</i>	Myrtle Wattle	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Acacia saligna</i>	Golden Wreath Wattle	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Adenanthos cuneatus</i>	Coastal Jug Flower	Shrub	Low
<i>Allocasuarina humilis</i>	Scrub Sheoak	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Allocasuarina lehmanniana</i>	Dune Sheoak	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Astartea corniculata</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Astartea fascicularis</i>	Recherche Astartea	Shrub	Low
<i>Astartea glomerulosa</i>	Early Astartea	Shrub	Low
<i>Astartea leptophylla</i>	River-bank Astartea	Shrub	Low
<i>Banksia coccinea</i>	Scarlet Banksia	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Banksia formosa</i>	Showy Dryandra	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Banksia littoralis</i>	Swamp Banksia	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Banksia sessilis</i>	Parrot Bush	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Beaufortia anisandra</i>	Dark Beaufortia	Shrub	Low
<i>Beaufortia decussata</i>	Gravel Bottlebrush	Shrub	Low
<i>Beaufortia sparsa</i>	Swamp Bottlebrush	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Billardiera fusiformis</i>	Australian Bluebell	Climber	Low
<i>Boronia alata</i>	Coastal Boronia, Winged Boronia	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Bossiaea linophylla</i>	Golden Cascade	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Callistemon glaucus</i>	Albany Bottlebrush	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Callistemon phoeniceus</i>	Lesser Bottlebrush	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Callitris preissii</i>	Rottnest Island Pine	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Calothamnus lateralis</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Calothamnus quadrifidus</i>	One-sided Bottlebrush	Shrub	Low
<i>Crowea angustifolia</i>	Crowea	Shrub	Low
<i>Daviesia flexuosa</i>	—	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Gompholobium scabrum</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Grevillea pulchella</i>	Beautiful Grevillea	Shrub	Low

Scientific Name	Common Name	Plant Form	Priority
<i>Hakea ceratophylla</i>	Horned Leaf Hakea	Shrub	Low
<i>Hakea cucullata</i>	Hood Leaved Hakea	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Low
<i>Hakea ferruginea</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Hakea lissocarpa</i>	Honey Bush	Shrub	Low
<i>Hakea oleifolia</i>	Dungyn	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Hakea trifurcata</i>	Two-leaf Hakea	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Hardenbergia comptoniana</i>	Native Wisteria	Climber	Moderate
<i>Hibbertia cuneiformis</i>	Cut-leaf Hibbertia	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Hypocalymma angustifolium</i>	White Myrtle	Shrub	Low
<i>Hypocalymma cordifolium</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Hypocalymma ericifolium</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Kennedia coccinea</i>	Coral Vine	Climber	Moderate
<i>Kunzea micrantha</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Kunzea recurva</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Melaleuca diosmifolia</i>	Green Honeymyrtle	Shrub	Low
<i>Melaleuca incana</i>	Grey Honeymyrtle	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Low
<i>Melaleuca pentagona</i>	—	Shrub	Low
<i>Melaleuca preissiana</i>	Moonah	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Low
<i>Melaleuca striata</i>	Sand Honey Myrtle	Shrub	Low
<i>Melaleuca thymoides</i>	Sand Wattle-Myrtle	Shrub	Low
<i>Olearia axillaris</i>	Coastal Daisy Bush	Shrub	Low
<i>Paraserianthes lophantha</i>	Cape Leeuwin Wattle, Albizia	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Pericalymma ellipticum</i>	Swamp Teatree	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Pimelea ferruginea</i>	Coastal Pimelea	Shrub	Low
<i>Rhagodia baccata</i>	Berry Saltbush	Shrub	Low
<i>Scaevola crassifolia</i>	Thick-leaved Fanflower	Shrub	Low
<i>Taxandria fragrans</i>	Autumn Teatree	Shrub	Moderate
<i>Taxandria linearifolia</i>	Swamp Peppermint	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Taxandria parviceps</i>	Fine Teatree	Large Shrub/Small Tree	Moderate
<i>Verticordia plumosa</i>	Plumed Featherflower	Shrub	Low
<i>Westringia dampieri</i>	Shore Westringia	Shrub	Low



DESIGNING A POSSUM-FRIENDLY GARDEN

Creating a garden that supports western ringtail possums and other local wildlife involves more than just choosing native plants – it's about thoughtful design, structure, and long-term planning.

1. MATCH THE PLANT TO YOUR SITE

Selecting the right plant for the right location increases survival rates and long-term success.

- **Soil Type** – Identify whether your site has sandy, loamy, gravelly, clay, or lateritic soils, and choose species suited to those conditions.
- **Sun & Moisture** – Observe which areas are sunny, shady, dry, or seasonally wet. Many native species are highly adaptable but will thrive when planted in optimal microclimates.
- **Wind & Exposure** – Use taller species or dense shrubs as windbreaks to protect smaller, more sensitive plants.

2. BUILD IN LAYERS

To replicate natural ecosystems and provide shelter, food, and movement pathways for wildlife, aim to include a range of vegetation heights and forms:

- **Large Trees (15m+)** – e.g. Marri, Jarrah, Blackbutt (suitable only for larger peri-urban properties).
- **Medium Trees (7–15m)** – e.g. Peppermint, Sheoak, Albany Blackbutt.
- **Large Shrubs / Small Trees (4–12m)** – e.g. Pincushion Hakea, Parrot Bush, Lesser Bottlebrush.
- **Shrubs (1–4m)** – e.g. Summer Snowflakes, Scrub Sheoak, Swamp Bottlebrush.
- **Ground Covers** – e.g. Kangaroo Paw, Native Flags, Coastal Sword Sedge.
- **Climbers** – e.g. Coral Vine, Native Wisteria for vertical structure and screening.

Note: You may need to source additional species beyond this guide to achieve full structural diversity.

3. DESIGN FOR WILDLIFE

To enhance habitat value for possums and other animals:

- **Prioritise Extra High or High species** – these offer food, drey sites, or movement pathways for western ringtail possums.
- **Add wildlife features** – Bird baths, frog ponds, hollow logs, rock piles, and artificial nest boxes help support a wider range of species.
- **Connect habitat** – Try to link tree canopies and understorey shrubs so wildlife can move safely through your garden.
- **Consider numbers and placement of plants.** You don't need to devote your whole garden to indigenous plants, consider blending them into your garden or creating small native zones.

4. GROWING LOCAL PLANTS

Think long-term from the outset:

- **Space plants appropriately** – Know their mature size and avoid overcrowding.
- **Group by water/sunlight needs** – This makes ongoing care easier and increases plant health.
- **Retain mature trees** – Existing canopy trees provide essential habitat and shade.
- **Mulch (5-10cm) and water well during establishment** – Most native plants become low-maintenance after the first 1–2 summers.
- **If you decide to use fertilizer, seek advice from your local nursery** as most native plants are sensitive to high levels of phosphorous.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANTING IN ALBANY

CHECK LOCAL GUIDELINES

Ensure your garden or verge plantings comply with City of Albany zoning regulations, verge planting guidelines, and bushfire management requirements.

FIRE SAFETY

Be aware of Building Protection Zones (BPZ) and Asset Protection Zones (APZ) if you live in a bushfire-prone area. Select low-flammability species and maintain defensible space around buildings.

INVASIVE SPECIES AND DISEASE

Avoid planting declared weeds or garden escapees that may harm local ecosystems. Reduce the spread and impact of phytophthora (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) dieback into your garden by asking for dieback-free materials including soil, gravel, potting mix, mulch and plants.

WATERWISE GARDENING

Select drought-tolerant native plants and use mulch to reduce evaporation and weeds.

RESPECT NEIGHBOURS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Avoid planting large trees near fences, driveways, footpaths, or underground services.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE

Regularly prune, weed, and water as needed during establishment to help plants thrive.

USEFUL RESOURCES

City of Albany website www.albany.wa.gov.au

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions 'Florabase' florabase.dbca.wa.gov.au

iNaturalist www.inaturalist.org

ReWild Perth rewildperth.com.au

PerthNRM Gardening for Wildlife www.perthnrm.com/project/gardening-for-wildlife

Water Corporation 'A-Z guide to WA native plants' www.watercorporation.com.au/help-and-advice/waterwise/garden/a-z-guide-to-wa-native-plants



Image credit:
Katherine Tattersall

Acknowledgements

Text: Emma Sommerville, Renae Van Noort, Bronte Van Helden. South Coast NRM.

This booklet has been produced by South Coast NRM as part of a collaborative project between South Coast NRM, Oyster Harbour Catchment Group, Torbay Catchment Group, UWA Albany, City of Albany, Southern Aboriginal Corporation and Cat Laws and Wildlife Survival Group. This project received grant funding from the Australian Government's Saving Native Species Program.

First edition, August 2025.

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